

KALB: Good day from Washington. I am Marvin Kalb inviting you to Meet the Press with Admiral Stansfield Turner, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

ANNOUNCER: Meet the Press, an unrehearsed press conference, is a public affairs presentation of NBC News.

KALB: Our guest today on Meet the Press is Adm. Stansfield Turner, who directed the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies during the Carter administration. A one-time Rhodes Scholar, Admiral. Turner formerly commanded the U.S. Second Fleet and the southern sector of NATO. His book, entitled 'Secrecy in Democracy', is due to be published early next year. Our reporters today are Haynes\Johnson of The Washington Post; David\Ignatius of the Wall Street Journal; Georgie\Anne\Geyer of Universal Syndicate; and to open the questioning, our regular panelist, Bill\Monroe, of NBC News.

MONROE: Admiral, attacks by airplanes of Iran and Iraq on oil tankers threatened to shut down the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. What should the U.S., what can the U.S. do about that? ADM.\STANSFIELD\TURNER (Former CIA Director): Bill, let's first put it in perspective. Iraq is harassing shipping going into the Iranian oil terminals. Iran is harassing shipping going into the Saudi, Bahraini, Kuwaiti and other oil terminals on the other side of the gulf. Despite this harassment, the price of oil has not gone up. That means the oil people feel there's enough coming out and probably will be for some time to come. Where the United States' interest is involved, is in not letting that...(next 15 seconds missing due to technical difficulty)

MONROE: The Saudi Arabians and some of their neighbors seem to be blaming Iran for events. There is talk that the United States is tilting against Iran. And The New York Times this morning quotes unnamed administration officials as believing that a successful and low-cost operation against Iran might be even more popular at home than the Grenada strike was. What is your comment on that? TURNER : I don't think that latter point is valid at all. To try to take out Iran and its capability for harassing shipping in the gulf would be a costly operation. You'd have to bomb all the Iranian air force bases, all the Iranian naval bases. They would retreat with the airplanes deep into Iran, and so on. It would become a difficult operation.

MONROE: But isn't Iran, in fact, chiefly responsible, at this point, for prolonging that war? TURNER : No, it's a two-sided problem. The Iraqis started the war; the Iranians responded. Iraq now is the one really initiating this war at sea. I think what the Saudis are trying to do, under our encouragement, is to pressure Iraq to cease its attacks on Iranian shipping. Iran has promised in the United Nations then to cease attacks on other shipping. If the Saudis cannot do that, it's because Iraq is pretty desperate right now, and that may well be the case. Then the Saudis have to fall back on their second plan, which they're trying sort of half-heartedly now, and that's to take information from the American AWACS aircraft over the gulf about when the Iranian planes are coming out to attack, and use it to send their own Saudi